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COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

Twenty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 502nd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 23 November 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BURNS

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* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.502/Add.1.

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CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 2) (continued)

1. Mr. MAVROMMATIS, supported by Ms. GAER, said that a general discussion of the Committee's methods of work should be included in the agenda for the following session. Among other things, the Committee should consider how many State party reports per session it could realistically handle. The main purpose of such a debate would be to encourage consistency in working methods and practices, thereby saving the Committee time in the long run.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 19 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4) (continued)

Conclusions and recommendations concerning the initial report of Zambia (CAT/C/47/Add.2; CAT/C/XXVII/Concl.4)

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Zambian delegation took places at the Committee table.

3. Mr. MAVROMMATIS, Country Rapporteur, read out the Committee's conclusions and recommendations concerning the initial report of Zambia (CAT/C/47/Add.2), which were contained in document CAT/C/XXVII/Concl.4.

4. Mr. BOWA (Zambia) said that the Committee's comments would be extremely useful in helping Zambia to achieve the goals it had set itself in the field of good governance and democratic principles, and would undoubtedly facilitate Zambian compliance with international obligations in the human rights sphere.

5. The Zambian delegation withdrew.

Conclusions and recommendations concerning the third periodic report of Israel (CAT/C/54/Add.1; CAT/C/XXVII/Concl.5)

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Israeli delegation took places at the Committee table.

7. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as Country Rapporteur, read out the Committee's conclusions and recommendations concerning the third periodic report of Israel (CAT/C/54/Add.1), which were contained in document CAT/C/XXVII/Concl.5.

8. Mr. LEVY (Israel) said that Israel was totally committed to honouring its obligations under international human rights treaties in spite of its ongoing struggle with terrorism. Israel was an open society, and the Israeli Government had chosen to engage in open dialogue with human rights treaty bodies. Torture was prohibited under Israeli law, and the principle of human dignity was enshrined in the Israeli Constitution. Nevertheless, the Israeli State was also under an obligation to protect its citizens from terrorism, so the human rights of detainees had to be weighed against the rights of society as a whole. The Supreme Court decision of 1999 was of

cardinal importance, since it absolutely prohibited the use of physical force during interrogations. Although the powers of the Israeli law enforcement and security forces had thus been circumscribed, the number of terrorist attacks had increased. Moreover, all detainees had the right directly to petition the Supreme Court sitting as a High Court of Justice: Israel was the only country in the world that offered such a remedy.

9. His delegation had taken due note of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, and welcomed the fact that the Committee had recognized the difficulties which the Israeli Government was facing. The very fact that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could operate freely in Israel and submit material to the Committee without restrictions surely indicated the openness of Israeli society. It was a matter of regret that some members of the Committee had focused on political issues outside the Committee's sphere of competence. The Committee against Torture was not the appropriate forum in which to debate the issues of curfews and house demolitions, for example, since such matters fell within the sphere of Israeli military operations, over which the Committee had no jurisdiction.

10. The Israeli delegation withdrew.

The public part of the meeting was suspended at 10.50 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

11. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the CHAIRMAN declared the twenty-seventh session of the Committee against Torture closed.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.